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From, *Democrat*

Ridgway Pa.

Date, *May 25, 1893.*

FOLLOWERS OF MARTIN LUTHER.

The 20th Anniversary of the First Evangelical Lutheran Church.—A History of the Society.

The twentieth anniversary of the First Evangelical Lutheran church was held Sunday, May 21, 1893. The church was neatly decorated and potted plants from the green house of Philip Lesser graced the altar and pulpit. The pictures of all the pastors who served the congregation, as well as that of the present pastor, and the history of the church were framed and found among the many things that attracted the attention of all present. But that which especially caught the eyes of the children was the beautiful transparency, the handiwork of Lewis Lesser. The exercises consisted of a memorial sermon by the pastor, in which he incorporated the history of the congregation and touchingly referred to all the former pastors, but especially the founder, who underwent great self denials during his labors for the cause in which he was so zealously interested and eminently successful. The communion was administered and the choir rendered a beautiful anthem appropriate for the occasion.

It being Whit Sunday was also prominently set forth during the entire service. In the evening the Sunday school Pentacostal mission services took place, when again quite an audience had assembled, listened attentively and heartily took part in the responsive services. Miss Kate Bruner recited a poem in the English and Mr. Nusbaum a German one. Both referred to the great fact of the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples and were well rendered. The congregation was favored with a fine anthem by the English choir which was lately organized. The pastor in a few well chosen words addressed the audience, and his remarks were well received and greatly enjoyed. The offerings for missions amounted to a neat sum, which proved that both old and young are interested in the spread of the gospel among the destitute and neglected.

At a meeting of the Pittsburg synod of

the Lutheran church of the General Council held at Sagertown, Pa., Sept. 28, 1870, it was resolved that the missionary president, Rev. Samuel Laird, be authorized in connection with the northern conference of that body, to employ Rev. Isaac Breneman to explore and to supply any destitute places in the northern counties of the synod's territory. In accordance with the above action, Rev. Breneman commenced operations in Ridgway, Elk Co., Pa., then a mere hamlet.

The first sermon was preached in the German language in the old Court House on the first Lord's day of December, 1870. At that time there were but four Lutheran families found in the place, namely: George Walker's, Philip Lesser's, Arnold Brügger's and Casper Brügger's. From that time regular services were held in the German and English language. The first communion was held Easter Sunday, 1871, when twenty-five persons communed and fourteen were baptised. April 14, 1872, the congregation was organized, the membership numbering thirty-five. A constitution was adopted, officers elected and installed, who were: George Walker elder, John Christ and John Wunderlich deacons, John A. Miller, Philip Lesser and Casper Brügger trustees. The latter three constituted also the building committee.

A suitable lot was secured near the east end of South street. On application, it was received into the connection of the Pittsburgh synod, at a meeting held in St. James Lutheran church, Westmoreland county, Pa.

At a regular meeting of the board of trustees it was resolved that house of worship be erected, 36x50 feet, and that the corner stone of the same be laid on Sunday, the 25th day of May, 1873. Rev. H. W. Roste, the president of the synod, and Rev. A. G. Bruegel assisted the missionary. The former preached the sermon. Rev. Breneman, the founder, continued his labors of great self-denial until toward the close of the year 1878, when the communicant membership numbered about one hundred.

Rev. John Sander, after supplying the congregation for about a year, was called as its regular pastor. He served it with great success from June, 1880, to August 2, 1885. During his time the congregation became self sustaining, secured the parsonage, repaired the church and freed the congregation of all debts. At the close of

his labors the membership had grown to one hundred and twenty-five. A very flourishing Sunday school was established during his time. Rev. A. F. Schaeffer was the third pastor, serving the congregation two years and a half. He introduced the clerical robe and had the sacristy built. The fourth pastor was Rev. A. R. J. Graepp, serving faithfully for about four years. During that time the parsonage was enlarged and greatly improved and the sheds erected.

Rev. E. Cressman, the fifth and present pastor, after serving awhile as supply, was called January 1st, 1893. The work, in his hands, is progressing encouragingly to both pastor and people. On Good Friday a class of twenty-nine was confirmed and ten received by letter. At Easter the largest number in the history of the congregation communed, which was 180. The present membership is 264. The Sunday school is flourishing and has kept pace with the congregation. During the existence of the church 550 infants were baptized, 320 persons confirmed, 148 couples married, 154 funerals held.

Comparing the present prosperous condition with the humble beginning, every member has reason thankfully to say with Joshua of old, "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us."

From, *Democrat*
Ridgway Pa.
 Date, *Oct. 19th 1893.*

RIDGWAY

BRIEF OUTLINE OF RIDGWAY'S HISTORY FROM ITS FIRST SETTLEMENT.

Remarkable Transition From a Little Village
 to a Thriving and Bustling Borough--
 Business Interests Portrayed.



RIDGWAY HAS ITS history, and it begins in 1820, when Jacob Ridgway, accompanied by James Gillis, traveled over the country of Elk on horseback, for the purpose of finding a suitable place to lay the foundation of a town. The country was covered by a thick growth of hemlock

trees. Game—such as elk, deer, bear, panthers and wildcats were found in great abundance, and fish abounded in the streams. Mr. Ridgway was charmed with the country and decided to build himself a home, on the present site of Montmorenci, six miles north of Ridgway. He accordingly sent out James Gillis in 1821 to open up the country and erect a home.

Gillis and his men traveled on horseback in single file, with provisions and necessities on pack-mules, as there were no roads opened through the country at that time. In the fall of 1822 they had a tract cleared and sown in an immense buckwheat field.

The first tree that was cut down in our little valley was chopped by Joseph Taylor in 1822, near the present site of Osterhout's tannery.

Owing to the timber, lumbering has been the most profitable business. It was the leading industry until 1870, and it is carried on to some considerable extent yet in the vicinity of Ridgway.

The first saw-mill was erected by Enoch Gillis in 1823, at the western end of the town, and is standing as it did seventy years ago, only it is transformed into part of an ax factory.

James Gallagher and family arrived in 1825, by the same trail Gillis entered.

Later on, J. S. Hyde, father of W. H. Hyde, entered Ridgway, clothed in overalls and all his possessions tied up in a handkerchief. He entered the small store of Gillis & Clover and wanted to buy an ax on credit; on being refused he told the store-keeper to keep his ax; that he would see the time when he could buy the whole store over and over.

The first school was held in Gallagher's log cabin near the present Ridgway Central Graded School, in 1826, under the control of Hannah Gilbert, and attended by the children of the three families residing here. Subsequently Ann Berry and Betsey Hyatt taught in an old red school house, which was situated at the present site of Dillon's meat market. In 1834, a house for common school purposes was erected above the old Dickinson homestead on the west side of the race and north side of Main street by Messrs. Crow, Gallagher, Thayer, Dickinson, Cobb and Cady, and Betsey Hyatt installed as teacher. She was succeeded by Mr. Barnutz in '35. A second building was erected in 1838 near the B., R. & P. depot. The same building is known to-day as the

Rochester House. In 1870, the main part of the Ridgway Borough school building was erected at a cost of \$7,000, and was opened with L. D. Rockwell, principal, and Adlie Taylor assistant. In 1874, three teachers were employed in this building. In 1885-6, the other part of the structure was erected. In 1887, pupils residing outside the borough were excluded. This necessitated the building of another school-house, which was located on G. G. Messenger's lot on Mill street; it was completed in 1887, and opened by Prof. Deveraux, principal, and B. E. Wilcox and Maggie Reese assistants.

Ridgway was laid out in 1833, when seven families resided here. In 1834, the first bridge was put across the Clarion river. It was 12x16 inch stringer resting on cribbing. Before this time teams forded the river and in times of high water boats were used. About 1874, an iron bridge was erected with one pier in the middle; but the flood of 1889 carried one-half of it away and the other half was removed to Elk creek on Broad street. Soon after another iron structure was erected which remains to be seen to-day.

main streets so quiet that rattlesnakes often lay in the road and sunned themselves. In 1854 W. H. Post killed a rattler on Main street that had on seven rattles.

Ridgway as remembered in 1836, by W. H. Schram, now deceased, was a very small town. Beginning at the western end, on the present site of Grant's tannery, was Dickinson's boarding house, then Henry Gross' house, then the saw-mill and a barn, next Van Osdall's plank dwelling. At M. E. Lesser's present site of residence was Caleb Dill's dwelling, justice shop and post-office, and across the road was his blacksmith shop. Just above lived Stephen Niver; at the northeast corner was John Cobb's house where Mrs. Dill resided until 1886. On the right hand of Main street a few rods east was James Gillis's home which has been remodelled and is now the home of W. H. Crocker. Next was Clover & Gillis's store. Crossing the race one came to the house of Geo. Dickinson on the south side and the store on the north side, which was carried below by the flood of 1861; it was removed and remodelled and is now a dwelling house on the west bank of the race and south side of Main street. On the east side of the Clarion was the Exchange Hotel, owned by David

Thayer, then Edward Derby's old red house; then the Lone Star Hotel, owned by P. T. Brooks, which was situated at the present place of G. G. Messenger's drug-store.

Ridgway prospered for thirty-four years, when a terrible fire laid it in ashes; it swept the whole side of the north square from the Ridgway Bank to Broad street, leaving the old Hyde House safe.

In September, 1882, a fire was discovered in the DEMOCRAT office between 2 and 3 o'clock in the morning, and in spite of all, the whole block was burned with the exception of an old barn and a few houses. The total loss amounted to about \$240,000.

This fire proved a benefit to Ridgway instead of a loss, as the buildings were of wood, irregular in construction and unsightly in appearance. Scarcely had the ground cooled when J. W. Morgester and R. I. Campbell began the work of rebuilding, the former completing his work before the close of the year, at a cost of \$6,000. In March, 1883, the work on Union Hall (a \$20,000 block) was commenced; also Powell & Kime's grand central, Ridgway Bank and G. W. Rhines' buildings. The block on the corner of Broad and Main streets was erected in 1890, for F. G. Earley, at a cost of \$12,000.

The Elk County Bank was established in 1874, and the Ridgway Bank, now insolvent, in 1875.

The Hyde House was built in 1858-59, and opened July 10th, by Mr. Osgood, who leased it from J. S. Hyde. In 1861, he retired and the house was conducted for Mr. Hyde, when Mrs. Cummings purchased it, who, with H. S. Belknap as manager, conducted the hotel until 1867, when a Mr. Moore, now of Olean, bought her interest. In 1869, W. H. Schram became owner. In 1887, Dr. Day purchased the house but continued Mr. Schram in its management.

The citizens of Elk county found it a hard task to decide where the seat of justice should be. The first Court was held at Caledonia, but Ridgway was at last decided upon. The first Court House was erected in 1845, and condemned in 1879. Hugh McGeehin bought the building and it is now known as the Bogert House. The new Court House was erected at a cost of \$65,000; the corner stone was laid in 1879 with proper ceremonies. The town clock is a Howard clock which cost \$700. The jail was erected in 1876 at a cost of about

\$38,000; it has 32 cells after the cage pattern, made of hardened chrome steel; it contains apartments for men and women. The Jail and Court House together cost over \$100,000.

On Nov. 26th, 1885, gas pipes were connected to the well at Johnsonburg, and in four minutes a volume of gas traveled six miles to the gasometer at the Hyde House.

In November, 1843, the water privilege was granted to the large spring southeast of the Ridgway borough school building and a company was organized with stock valued at \$50,000.

Within the last few years Ridgway has been building up quite rapidly, and we have now, as THE ELK DEMOCRAT expresses it:

A bank.
An armory.
A gun club.
Fifty stores.
Natural gas.
A gunsmith.
A social club.
Two bakeries.
A town clock.
Book bindery.
Twelve hotels.
Three schools.
Three dentists.
Steam laundry.
Four railroads.
Bottling works.
An undertaker.
Two orchestras.
Two grist mills.
Three saw mills.
Seven churches.
Seven ministers.
An opera house.
Sixteen lawyers.
A "poker den."
Two newspapers.
Telephone office.
Two tailor shops.
Seven physicians.
Six barber shops.
Three drugstores.
A lady physician.
Three brass bands.
Two harness shops.
Electric light plant.
Four meat markets.
Ten secret societies.
Two machine shops.
Several shoemakers.
Three livery stables.

Two furniture stores.
Three jewelry stores.
Armour refrigerator.
Several millionaires.
Court house and jail.
Two edge tool works.
W. U. telegraph office.
Three hardware stores.
Two immense tanneries.
Seven blacksmith shops.
Two photograph parlors.
Driving Park association.
Sash and door manufactory.
An excellent fire department.
Two railroad superintendents.
Company H, of 16th regiment.
Three millinery establishments.
Three contractors and builders.
Two upholstering establishments.
Two Building and Loan Associations.









